

## Australian Koala debuts in platinum

By Roger Boye

The world's newest bullion coin—the Australian Koala made of 99.95 percent pure platinum and depicting a koala "teddy bear"—is expected to make its debut in selected coin shops and brokerage houses by late September.

Australia becomes the first large country to market such platinum coinage, although Canada has announced it will introduce a similar item, possibly by year's end. Since 1984 the Isle of Man "Noble" has dominated the platinum bullion-coin market.

As with many other types of bullion coins, the Koala will be produced in four sizes—one-tenth ounce to one ounce—and will sell for the value of the metal plus a small sales commission.

The one ounce coin probably would retail for \$550 to \$570 if platinum costs \$525 on the day of sale.

Platinum is a precious metal that's used in jewelry and in catalytic converters for automobiles; among other things, the metal has a high melting point, resists acids and doesn't tarnish.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Mint has set a Sept. 23 deadline for postmarks on orders for proof specimens of 1988 gold and silver American Eagles.

Prices range from \$23 for a one-ounce silver coin to \$585 for a one-ounce gold Eagle.

To order, send a check or money order to the U.S. Mint, Customer Service Center, 10001 Aerospace Drive, Lanham, Md. 20706. For more information call



The new Australian Koala bullion coin, available later this month, pairs that popular marsupial with Queen Elizabeth II on the obverse.

the mint at (301) 436-7400.

Proof coins are made with specially prepared slugs and dies, and are intended for sale to collectors rather than to precious-metal investors.



Federal officials have boosted the prices for some government-made bronze medals by about 30 percent to cover increased production costs.

The large (usually three-inch diameter) medals now cost \$21 by mail, up from the \$16 charged since February 1984. Medals with diameters of 1½ inches will remain at \$2.25.

Over the years Uncle Sam has produced hundreds of different medal types, including specimens honoring the presidents and bronze duplicates of Congressional Gold Medals presented to military heroes and other famous Americans.

The most recent issue—depicting the late George and Ira Gershwin—are copies in bronze of gold medals that President Reagan presented to members of the Gershwin family in June.

For a free, 12-page brochure listing the medals currently available, prices and an order form, write to the United States Mint

(Medals Brochure), Customer Service Center, 10001 Aerospace Drive, Lanham, Md. 20706. The federal government has been selling bronze medals to collectors since 1861.



The British Royal Mint is distributing a new Directory of North American Dealers that sell the mint's Britannia gold bullion coin. To order a free copy of the directory—which includes information on 16 Illinois dealers—call, toll free, (800) 822-BRIT.

Also, U.S. Mint workers continue to fill requests for the American Eagle Buyers Guide, a listing of companies offering Uncle Sam's bullion coins. Call (800) USA-GOLD to request a free copy.